

U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (MO-08) today spoke in support of a drought relief bill which contains the language of legislation she introduced last week which would renew three livestock disaster programs. A vote will be held later today.

Emerson's remarks can be viewed here: ( <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olL9IIWkk6o> ). The text of Emerson's remarks follows:

Mr. Speaker, the drought which is devastating U.S. producers of agriculture throughout the nation poses a serious threat to every American family which plans on visiting a grocery store this year. American farmers and ranchers are on the ropes right now, and this legislation is desperately needed.

I can't tell you how important the leadership and cooperation of Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson has been on this issue. Statistically speaking, this is the worst drought since the 1950's. The forage situation for livestock is the worst since 1933.

In Southern Missouri, the drought is breaking the life's work of dairy farmers like Stacey McCallister, who wrote this to me: "I've been talking to some farmers and the feed prices are going to put us out of business. Milk isn't coming up at all on price and feed costs are doubling in cases... the sorriest hay you could feed a heifer is at \$200 a ton, I used to buy it for \$30 a ton... I feel like my heart is in my stomach right now." This picture of his farm tells the heartbreaking story.

According to Stacey, even if you want to sell off part of your herd you're out of luck – there is no more room for cows at the sale barn where they hold livestock auctions. There is about one penny of profit margin on the milk he is selling today.

Our response to this disaster must begin with this effort to re-instate the emergency programs which were allowed to expire last October 1st. We've paid for the reauthorization of these four programs in this legislation, and there is no reason to not renew them.

These programs are a safety net for livestock producers in free-fall. They need this assistance – and we need to give it to them or else risk losing the heart and soul of the agricultural backbone of our nation, the families who put literally food on our tables.

I urge support for this legislation at a crucial hour of need for America's livestock producers, and I yield back the balance of my time.